

carry bulky volumes in my suitcase, I simply photocopy those portions that I need during my trip.

In the early days Muṣḥafs were scribed on parchment of course, usually much heavier than paper, so that a full Muṣḥaf may have weighed a few kilograms. And we have many examples (for instance the Yemenī collection; see Figures 5.1-5.2) where the Qur'ān is written in such large calligraphy that an entire Muṣḥaf's thickness would easily exceed one metre.



Figure 5.1: A parchment from the Yemenī collection. Dimensions are ~ 18cm x 13cm. Courtesy: National Archive Museum of Yemen.

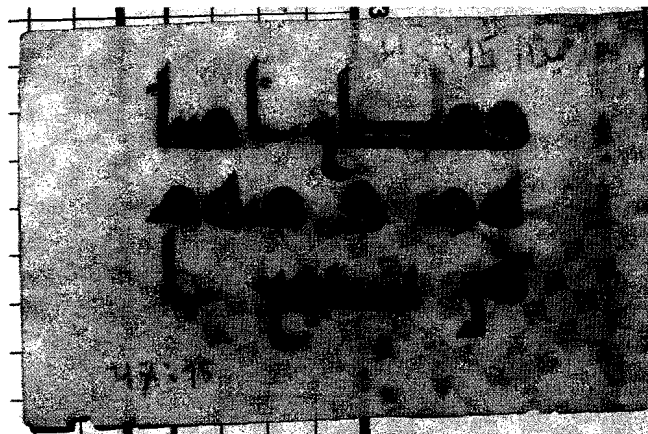


Figure 5.2: Another parchment from the Yemenī collection. Dimensions are ~ 13cm x 8cm. Courtesy: National Archive Museum of Yemen

Taking the Muṣḥaf that is printed by the King Fahd complex in Madinah as a standard, we find that it contains some six hundred pages (approximately 9,000 lines). Interestingly, the entire text of the parchment in Figure 5.2 is half a line in the Muṣḥaf printed at Madinah, meaning that an entire Muṣḥaf written on that scale would require 18,000 pages. Voluminous calligraphy is by no means rare, but it does generally indicate that the Muṣḥaf consisted of no more than a handful of sūras. Library shelves throughout the world are filled with partially written Qur'āns; listed below are a few dozen examples from just a single library, the Salar Jung Museum⁴² in Hyderabad, India.

<i>Manuscript No.</i>	<i>No. of suras</i>	<i>Order of suras</i>	<i>Date</i> ⁴³
244	29	36, 48, 55, 56, 62, 67, 75, 76, 78, 93, 94, 72, 97 and 99-114	c. Early 11th
246	16	62 (first 8 ayahs only), 110, 1, 57, 113, 56, 94, 114, 64, 48, 47, 89, 112, 36, 78 and 67	c. An early 10th, and late 11th century copy
247	10	1, 36, 48, 56, 67, 78, 109 and 112-114	
248	9	73, 51, 67, 55, 62, 109 and 112-114	1076 A.H. (=1666 C.E.)
249	9	17, 18, 37, 44, 50, 69, 51, 89 and 38	1181 A.H. (=1767 C.E.)
250	9	20, 21, 22, 63 and 24-28	c. Early 12th
251	8	6, 36, 48, 56, 62, 67, 76 and 78	c. Early 11th
252	8	1, 6, 18, 34, 35, 56, 67 and 78	c. Early 11th
255	8	1, 36, 48, 55, 67, 73, 56 and 78	c. Early 14th
253	8	36, 48, 56, 62, 67, 71, 73 and 78	c. Late 11th
254	7	1, 55, 56, 62, 68, 73 and 88	c. Late 12th
256	7	36, 48, 78, 56, 67, 55 and 73	c. Early 11th
257	7	36, 48, 78, 67, 56, 73 and 62	c. Mid 11th
258	7	18, 32, 36, 48, 56, 67 and 78	c. Late 11th
259	7	18, 36, 37, 48, 56, 67 and 78	c. Late 11th
260	7	36, 48, 56, 67, 78, 55 and 62	c. Late 12th
261	7	36, 48, 78, 56, 67, 55 and 73	c. Late 13th
262	6	1, 36, 48, 56, 67 and 78	1115 A.H. (=1704 C.E.)

⁴² Muhammad Ashraf, *A Catalogue of Arabic Manuscripts in Salar Jung Museum & Library*, pp. 166-234.

⁴³ Some Muṣḥafs had the scribing date written on them, while others are undated. For the latter, I copied the approximate date (A.H.) as per the catalogue and preceded it with the circa symbol.

<i>Manuscript No.</i>	<i>No. of suras</i>	<i>Order of suras</i>	<i>Date</i>
263	6	36, 48, 55, 56, 67 and 68	1278 A.H. (=1862 C.E.)
264	6 ⁴⁴	1, 36, 48, 56, 78 and 67	c. Early 10th
265	6 ⁴⁵	18, 36, 71, 78, 56 and 67	c. Late 13th
266	6	36, 55, 56, 62, 63 and 78	989 A.H. (=1581 C.E.)
267	5	36, 48, 56, 67 and 78	1075 A.H. (=1664 C.E.)
268	5	36, 48, 56, 67 and 78	1104 A.H. (=1692 C.E.)
270	5	36, 48, 56, 67 and 78	1106 A.H. (=1694 C.E.)
271	5	36, 48, 67, 72 and 78	1198 A.H. (=1783 C.E.)
272	5	36, 48, 56, 67 and 78	1200 A.H. (=1786 C.E.)
273	5	36, 48, 55, 56 and 67	1237 A.H.
275	5	36, 78, 48, 56 and 67	626 A.H. (=1228 C.E.).
279	5	36, 48, 56, 67 and 78	Copied by Yāqūt al-Musta'şimī
280	5	1, 6, 18, 34 and 35	1084 A.H. (=1673 C.E.)
281	5	36, 48, 56, 59 and 62	c. Early 10th
282	5	1, 6, 18, 34 and 35	c. Early 10th
284	5	6, 36, 48, 56 and 67	c. Late 10th
296	5	18, 36, 44, 67 and 78	c. Early 12th
308	4	6, 18, 34 and 35	c. Early 9th
310	4	6-9	c. Early 12th

We can conclude that anyone desiring to scribe a partial Muṣḥaf would have felt at liberty to place the sūras in whichever order he saw fit.

4. Conclusion

By understanding the need to document every verse, the Muslim community (already swelling with the ranks of the *ḥuffāẓ*) was setting up both an aid to memorisation, and a barrier to shield the text from corruptive influences. Even the grind of Makkan oppression could not dampen this resolve, and when the Muslims at last enjoyed the prosperity of Madinah the entire nation, literate and illiterate alike, took this task to heart. At the centre of this nation resided its energising focal point, the final Messenger, dictating, explaining, and arranging every verse through the divine inspiration which was his privilege alone, till all the pieces were in place and the Book was complete. How the sacred text fared after the Prophet's death, and how the nation shunned complacency and exerted renewed efforts to ensure the Qur'ān's integrity, are the focuses of our next chapter.

⁴⁴ Six sūras with some supplications in accordance with the Shiite creed.

⁴⁵ In addition to some supplications in accordance with the Shiite creed.